



OFFICIAL STUDY GUIDE 2001 EDITION



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COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM

Humanities

Description of the Examination

The General Examination in Humanities tests general knowledge of literature, art, and music. It is broad in its coverage, with questions on all periods from classical to contemporary and in many different fields: poetry, prose, philosophy, history of art, music, dance, and theater. The exam requires candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the humanities through recollection of specific information, comprehension and application of concepts, and analysis and interpretation of various works of art.

Because the exam is very broad in its coverage, it is unlikely that any one person will be equally proficient in all the fields it covers. The exam is 90 minutes long and includes approximately 150 multiple-choice questions to be answered in two separately timed 45-minute sections.

For candidates with satisfactory scores on the Humanities exam, colleges may grant up to six semester hours (or the equivalent) of credit toward fulfillment of a distribution requirement. Some may grant credit for a particular course that matches the exam in content.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the test require candidates to demonstrate one or more of the following abilities.

- Knowledge of factual information such as names, works, etc. (about 50 percent of the exam)
- Recognition of techniques such as rhyme scheme, medium, and matters of style, and ability to identify them as characteristic of certain writers, artists, schools, or periods (about 30 percent of the exam)
- Understanding and interpretation of literary passages and art works (provided in reproductions) that most candidates probably will not have seen before (about 20 percent of the exam)

The subject matter of the General Examination in Humanities is drawn from the following topics.

▼	<i>Approximate Percent of Examination</i>
	Fine Arts (50%)
25%	Visual arts (painting, sculpture, etc.)
15%	Music
5%	Performing arts (film, dance, etc.)
5%	Architecture
	Literature (50%)
5-10%	Drama
15-20%	Poetry
10-15%	Fiction
5-10%	Nonfiction
5%	Philosophy

The exam questions, drawn from the entire history of Western art and culture, are fairly evenly divided among the following periods: Classical, Medieval and Renaissance, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nineteenth century, and twentieth century. In addition, there are questions that draw on non-Western cultures, such as those of Africa and Asia. Some of the questions cross disciplines and/or chronological periods, and a substantial number test knowledge of terminology, genre, and style.

Sample Questions

The 25 sample questions that follow are similar to questions on the Humanities exam, but they do not appear on the actual exam. Four examples (followed by answers and explanations) are provided first to give you an idea of the types of questions that appear in the Humanities exam.

Before attempting to answer the sample questions, read all the information about the Humanities exam on the preceding pages. Additional suggestions for preparing for CLEP exams are provided in Chapter 1.

Try to answer correctly as many questions as possible. Then compare your answers with the correct answers, given at the end of this examination guide.

EXAMPLE 1

The following lines are from a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning that you would not be expected to have read before. In fact, it was chosen because it is not likely to be familiar to you already. The questions that accompany such a passage are designed to examine your ability to analyze and interpret.

I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach.

In the context of the lines quoted above, "passionless" (line 1) means

- (A) reasonable (B) practical and efficient
(C) numb and still (D) uncaring and untouched
(E) able to find release

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Explanation and Answer

This question concerns the basic point of the passage. It focuses on the word *passionless*, which is central to the meaning of the lines. Normally, one describes grief as a state of extreme emotion; the point Browning makes is that hopeless grief has gone beyond despair. It is without passion; the emotions are frozen. The correct answer, therefore, is (C) *numb and still*.

The hasty reader may choose (A) *reasonable* because of the familiar contrast between reason and emotion (passion), or (B) *practical and efficient* because these descriptions are typical contrasts with the word *passionate*. In both instances, the reader would be somewhat careless; he or she would not be considering the special meaning Browning chose for the word in the context of the lines. Without careful examination, *passionless* might suggest that the person who grieves is simply without emotion, *uncaring and untouched*, and that (D) is then the answer. Or, the reader might assume that, if passionless, a person is (E) *able to find release*. Again, both (D) and (E) miss the central point and are not logical in terms of the rest of the passage.

In this question, you are asked to deal with an idea about grief that is somewhat unusual. If you read inattentively or have a preconception about poetry that leads you to expect all poems to be optimistic or soothing, you may be misled. Answering the question correctly, however, demonstrates your ability to deal with poetic language.

EXAMPLES 2 AND 3

Test questions on passages may also deal with such matters as rhyme scheme, poetic devices, and matters of style. If the style or ideas expressed are particularly distinctive and representative, you may be asked to identify the author. The questions below ask you to apply what you know to two lines of poetry.

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light.

The lines above were written by

- (A) Geoffrey Chaucer (B) Alexander Pope
(C) William Blake (D) Robert Frost
(E) Emily Dickinson

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Which of the following describes the lines above?

- (A) Blank verse (B) Free verse (C) A triolet
(D) A couplet (E) A quatrain

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Explanation and Answers

The quotation is a typical example of its period, and you should be able to use both form and content in answering the first question. [The correct answer is (B).] For the second question, you must apply your knowledge of poetic forms. [The correct answer is (D).] In the same way, you may be asked to identify the style of a building or a painting or to recognize or interpret its subject matter.

EXAMPLE 4

Another type of test question asks you to relate the content of one work of art to another work of art. In the following question, for example, you are asked about the style and subject of a work by the twentieth-century painter Lois Mailou Jones.



The National Museum of American Art,
Smithsonian Institution, Purchase made
possible by Mrs. N.H. Green, Dr. R. Harlan,
and Francis Musgrave.

The painting above has been influenced most strongly by which of the following?

- (A) Japanese prints (B) Native American blankets
(C) Assyrian sculpture (D) Gothic gargoyles
(E) African masks

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Explanation and Answer

To answer this question correctly, you must look at the picture carefully, note the principal features of its style, and connect that style to another kind of art. The painting features a mask-like shape in which the elements of the human face are highly abstracted to almost purely geometric forms.

Japanese prints, choice (A), use abstraction but not in the way seen in the face here. Some Japanese prints of the eighteenth century, for example, use bold lines and decorative patterns to create a tension between the representation of space and the use of two-dimensional patterns. Native American blankets, choice (B), such as some from the Pacific Northwest made by the Tlingit people, sometimes feature abstract portrayals of faces. However, these faces are often represented in a two-dimensional manner, again focusing on line rather than on three-dimensional shapes. Assyrian sculpture, choice (C), often uses monumental sculpted figures of human heads with animal bodies, a combination not seen in this mask-like representation. Gothic gargoyles, choice (D), are grotesque, sculpted, animal-like figures that were incorporated in the architecture of Gothic cathedrals. In contrast to the work shown here, they did not depict human figures. African masks, choice (E), the correct choice, are often similar to the mask-like image seen in this painting. Masks from the Dan people of Liberia, for example, frequently emphasize abstraction of human features, as well as symmetry of design and sharpness of carving. African art exerted a strong influence on Cubist art of the early twentieth century. In this work of 1938, an African American artist interprets an African tradition.

Now, try to answer correctly as many of the following questions as possible. Then compare your answers with the correct answers, in Appendix A.

Directions: Each of the questions or incomplete statements below is followed by five suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

1. Often read as a children's classic, it is in reality a scathing indictment of human meanness and greed. In its four books, the Lilliputians are deranged, the Yahoos obscene.

The passage above discusses

- (A) *Tom Jones*
- (B) *David Copperfield*
- (C) *The Pilgrim's Progress*
- (D) *Gulliver's Travels*
- (E) *Alice in Wonderland*

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

2. Which of the following deals with the bigotry an anguished Black family faces when it attempts to move into an all-White suburb?
 - (A) O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*
 - (B) Miller's *Death of a Salesman*
 - (C) Baraka's *Dutchman*
 - (D) Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
 - (E) Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

3. Which of the following has as its central theme the idea that wars are mass insanity and that armies are madhouses?
 - (A) *Song of Solomon*
 - (B) *Portnoy's Complaint*
 - (C) *Catch-22*
 - (D) *The Invisible Man*
 - (E) *The Color Purple* (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

4. Which of the following is often a symbol of new life arising from death?
 - (A) A gorgon
 - (B) The minotaur
 - (C) A unicorn
 - (D) A griffin
 - (E) The phoenix (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

5. The lute is most similar to the modern
 - (A) guitar
 - (B) piano
 - (C) violin
 - (D) accordion
 - (E) flute (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

6. The troubadours of the Middle Ages are best described as
 - (A) poet-musicians
 - (B) moralistic orators
 - (C) free-lance illustrators
 - (D) character actors
 - (E) religious philosophers (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 7-9 refer to illustrations (A) through (E).



(A)



(B)



(C)



(D)



(E)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
gift of Thomas F. Ryan, 1910.

7. Which is a bas-relief?

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

8. Which is by Rodin?

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

9. Which is Mayan?

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 10-12 refer to the following lines.

- (A) "Where the bee sucks there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie . . ."
- (B) "Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead."
- (C) "Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky."
- (D) "Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
. . . I now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh, . . ."
- (E) "Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
What a tale their terror tells
Of Despair!
. . . Yet the ear, it fully knows.
By the twanging,
And the clanging, . . .
In the jangling,
And the wrangling . . ."
10. Which excerpt contains several examples of onomatopoeia? (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
11. Which is from *Hamlet*? (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
12. Which alludes to Abraham Lincoln's death? (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 13-15 refer to the following.



13. The work pictured above is

- (A) a fresco
- (B) a stabile
- (C) a woodcut
- (D) an illumination
- (E) an etching

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

14. The theme of the work is the

- (A) sacrifice of Isaac
- (B) expulsion from Eden
- (C) reincarnation of Vishnu
- (D) creation of Adam
- (E) flight of Icarus

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

15. The work is located in the

- (A) Alhambra
- (B) Sistine Chapel
- (C) Parthenon
- (D) palace at Versailles
- (E) Cathedral of Notre Dame

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 16-17 refer to the following descriptions of the stage settings of plays.

- (A) The exterior of a two-story corner building on a street in New Orleans which is named Elysian Fields and runs between the L & N tracks and the river
- (B) The living room of Mr. Vandergelder's house, over his hay, feed, and provision store in Yonkers, fifteen miles north of New York City
- (C) In, and immediately outside of, the Cabot farmhouse in New England, in the year 1850
- (D) The stage of a theater; daytime
- (E) A room that is still called the nursery. . . . It is May, the cherry trees are in blossom, but in the orchard it is cold, with a morning frost.

16. Which is for a play by Tennessee Williams? (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

17. Which is for a play by Anton Chekhov? (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 18-20 refer to the following groups of people.

- (A) George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, Martha Graham
 - (B) John Cage, Aaron Copland, Paul Hindemith
 - (C) Spike Lee, Robert Altman, Federico Fellini
 - (D) Allen Ginsberg, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sylvia Plath
 - (E) I. M. Pei, Philip Johnson, Frank Lloyd Wright
18. Which is a group of architects? (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
19. Which is a group of choreographers? (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
20. Which is a group of twentieth-century poets? (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

21. He believed that tragedy effects the proper purgation of those emotions of pity and fear that it has aroused.

The author and concept referred to in the sentence above are

- (A) Plato..*hubris* (B) Leibniz..*monad*
 (C) Aristotle..*catharsis* (D) Locke..*tabula rasa*
 (E) Kant..*the categorical imperative*

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

22. Which of the following composers was Picasso's closest musical contemporary?

- (A) Monteverdi (B) Josquin des Prez (C) Chopin
 (D) Stravinsky (E) Beethoven

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

23. Which of the following satirizes the eighteenth-century doctrine "whatever is, is right" in this "best of all possible worlds"?

- (A) Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*
 (B) Voltaire's *Candide*
 (C) Defoe's *Moll Flanders*
 (D) Hugo's *Les Misérables*
 (E) Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

24. Haiku is a form of Japanese

- (A) drama (B) poetry (C) pottery
 (D) sculpture (E) architecture

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

25. The terms "pas de deux," "plié," "tendu," and "glissade" are primarily associated with

- (A) ballet (B) string quartets (C) painting
 (D) theater (E) opera

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Study Resources

To do well on the Humanities exam, you should know something about each of the forms of literature and fine arts from the various periods and cultures listed earlier, in the paragraph following the examination percentages. No single book covers all these areas, so it will be necessary for you to refer to college textbooks, supplementary reading, and references for introductory courses in literature and fine arts at the college level. You can find these books in most college bookstores.

In addition to reading, a lively interest in the arts — going to museums and concerts, attending plays, seeing motion pictures, watching public television programs such as “Great Performances” and “Masterpiece Theatre,” and listening to radio stations that play classical music and feature discussions of the arts — constitutes excellent preparation. The Internet is another resource you could explore.

Additional suggestions for preparing for CLEP exams are provided in Chapter 1.

Answers to Sample Questions

Humanities

1. D
 2. E
 3. C
 4. E
 5. A
 6. A
 7. C
 8. E
 9. A
 10. E
 11. D
 12. B
 13. A
 14. D
 15. B
 16. A
 17. E
 18. E
 19. A
 20. D
 21. C
 22. D
 23. B
 24. B
 25. A
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